



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Lung Association releases State of the Air report; grades vary in Louisiana

BATON ROUGE – Louisiana’s air quality has been steadily improving, and the Department of Environmental Quality has data to show the entire state meets the 1-hour and 1997 8-hour federal standards for ozone. In the newly released 2011 “State of the Air” report, distributed annually by the American Lung Association, no Louisiana cities or parishes were listed in the top 25 for worst air quality, while several were recognized for good air quality.

The air quality data denotes the number of “unhealthy for sensitive people” days, “unhealthy” days or “very unhealthy” days within a specified period. This is indicated by the Air Quality Index, which uses color codes to denote the air quality on a given day. Days coded in orange indicate air quality that is deemed “unhealthy for sensitive people;” red indicates “unhealthy;” and purple indicates “very unhealthy.”

From Jan. 1, 2007 through Dec. 31, 2009, East Baton Rouge Parish had 33 orange days, one red day and no purple days. These indicators earned the parish an “F” on the American Lung Association grading scale for counties/parishes nationwide. For last year’s State of the Air report, East Baton Rouge Parish had 37 orange days over the period of Jan. 1, 2006 through Dec. 31, 2008. Newer data shows a downward trend with 26 orange days from Jan. 1, 2008 through Dec. 31, 2010.

The most polluted county for ozone was San Bernardino, Calif., which had 201 orange, 12 red and 14 purple days. San Bernardino received an F, as did No. 25 on the list which was Fairfield, Conn., which had 43 orange, seven red and zero purple days.

The report also listed cleanest counties. East Baton Rouge, Calcasieu, Caddo, Iberville, Lafayette, Ouachita, Rapides, St. Bernard, Tangipahoa and Terrebonne parishes were listed as the cleanest counties for short term particle pollution. Ouachita Parish was listed as one of the cleanest counties for ozone pollution. All monitored parishes in the state received a passing grade for particle pollution. In the same category, Alexandria, Houma-Bayou Cane-Thibodaux, Lafayette-Acadiana, Lake Charles-Jennings, Monroe-Bastrop and Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden were listed as Cleanest U.S. Cities.

“While the American Lung Association has graded several areas in Louisiana with an F, it doesn’t hide the fact that air quality in Louisiana is the best it’s been in decades,” said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. “We have data to show that the entire state meets the original one-hour and the 1997 eight-hour ozone standards. That is a monumental achievement for Louisiana and many people worked hard to reach this air quality milestone. I know there will be no slowing down in the efforts to improve air quality, and the environment as a whole, throughout the state.”

May is Clean Air Month in Louisiana, and May 2-6 is National Air Quality Awareness Week. While great strides have been made in improving air quality, with the strengthening of the standard for ozone likely this summer, there is still much to do. To sign up to get automatic air quality notifications, go to www.deq.louisiana.gov/enviroflash, and for current air quality information, go to www.deq.louisiana.gov/aqinfo.